



Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team

Richard Bolt
Richard Bolt, USA Team Leader
Manchester, NH

(603) 656-9778; rbolt@emersonecologics.com

Nancy Hobbs, Chair
USATF Mountain/Ultra/Trail Running Council

Colorado Springs, Colorado
(719) 573-4405; trlrunner@aol.com

www.cerritos.edu/lgersitz/MUT/Home.html

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Teva U.S. Mountain Running Shines in Alaska

GIRDWOOD, AK — The Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team had one of its best showings at the World Mountain Running Trophy (WMRT) on Sept. 21-22 on Mt. Alyeska. Both the U.S. men's and women's teams turned in strong eighth-place finishes in the team standings, while several individuals shined in the IAAF-sanctioned world championship event that was plagued by a freak snow shower. It was the first time the WMRT was held in the U.S. and only the second time the event was held outside of Europe.

Highlighting the weekend was the eighth-place individual finish from Anita Ortiz (Eagle, Colo.) amid a snowstorm in the senior women's 7.7K race up and down 2,231-foot Mt. Alyeska on Saturday. Ortiz, 39, was in 10th place at the top of the course, but ran smooth and strong on the snowy terrain and picked off two places during the long descent. The 2003 USA Mountain Running champion, finished the course in 42:33, more than a minute ahead of the course-record time she set on the same course on Aug. 9.

"I felt so good on that downhill," she said. "Normally I hate it, but I felt great. I actually think the snow helped make it a more controlled course."

Ortiz, the 2002 women's USATF Mountain Runner of the Year, became the first U.S. woman to crack the top 10 in a WMRT race and helped the U.S. women to their best ever finish (eighth) in the WMRT. Nikki Kimball of Elizabethtown, N.Y., ran a strong race and finished 24th in 44:04, while Kelli Lusk (Amherst, Mass.) rounded out the scoring in 39th place in 46:05. Kari DiStefano (Telluride, Colo.) was the final member of the U.S. team, placing 48th in 49:04.

On the men's side, Paul Low of Amherst, Mass., was the top American runner in the senior men's 11.5K race for the second year in a row. Although he started out slow (and was the No. 4 U.S. runner early on), he moved up the entire race, caught five runners on the long descent to the finish line and wound up in 15th place.

"The real trick was not to kill yourself on the first climb or the first downhill," said Low, the 2002 men's USATF Mountain Runner of the Year. "If you do that, you're not going to be able to climb very well on the second climb. And that's where the race really starts. I had been shooting for a top-10 finish all year, but I guess 15th is pretty close."

Bill Raitter of Estes Park, Colo. (29th, 55:49) also ran strong for the U.S. team, as did Eric Morse of Berlin, Vt. (60th, 58:26). Peter De La Cerda (61st, 58:31), and Simon Gutierrez (79th,

1:02:01), both of Alamosa, Colo., started strong but struggled with leg cramps and slippery footing after the initial climb. Scott Gall of Waterloo, Iowa (78th, 1:01:58) also competed for the U.S. team.

Maggie McManigal (Colorado Springs, Colo.), Jessica Pitzer (Nederland, Colo.) and Erika Ross (Colorado Springs, Colo.) were the top U.S. runners in Saturday's 4.2K junior women's race, finishing 30th, 32nd and 33rd, respectively. Andrew Payton (Woodland Park, Colo., 35th place), Eduardo Pasko (Colorado Springs, Colo., 38th), Rory Egelus (Anchorage, Alaska, 40th) and Brett Wilson (Loveland, Colo., 47th place) competed in the 7.7K men's junior race for the U.S.

"We brought a full squad to Alaska this year which included alternates not only to provide team support, but also to give additional runners an opportunity to gain experience at an international level. We are especially interested in a development program for our junior athletes that includes identifying potential team members and keeping their interest level keen as they graduate to the senior ranking," says USATF MUT Chair Nancy Hobbs. "I am proud of our athletes and ecstatic for Anita. It has been a delight to watch our women's team mature since our first trophy in 1995 where we finished at the bottom of the team standings to consistent top ten finishes including our solid eight place this year."

The World Mountain Running Trophy is sanctioned by the World Mountain Running Association (WMRA), the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF), and USA Track & Field (the national governing body in the USA for track & field, long distance running and race walking).

The 2003 Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team was chosen through a series of selection races and by the USA Track & Field Mountain/Ultra/Trail Running Council. Sponsors of this year's team include Teva and SpecialOps Nutrition. Adam Druckman, Teva Sports Marketing Manager, says "Teva is pleased to introduce two new products in the Spring 2004 trail running line. Both shoes will include design features inspired by the Teva US Mountain Running Team."

Visit www.wmrt2003.org for complete results and more information about the WMRT.